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RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0524  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 004905

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/18/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION DPJ STRUGGLES FOR CONSENSUS ON OEF  
COUNTERPROPOSAL

REF: A. TOKYO 4678

[1](#)B. TOKYO 4593

[1](#)C. TOKYO 4043

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, reasons  
1.4(b),(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Main opposition DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa has drawn heavy criticism over the past week, including from some members of his own party, over a series of counterproposals seeking to replace Japan's current support to Operation Enduring Freedom with some form of as yet undefined support to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The ruling parties approved a bill authorizing a continuation of Japan's Indian Ocean refueling efforts on October 17. This bill will be introduced to the Lower House for committee deliberations on October 23. The DPJ has already indicated it will hold the measure for up to 60 days in the Upper House, forcing the ruling parties into a tactical decision on whether to extend the Diet beyond its November 10 end date and use their two-thirds majority in the Lower House to pass the measure this term. The DPJ says it is drawing up its own bill, but has not yet disclosed the contents. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) The main opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) continues to maintain that it will submit a counterproposal to legislation approved by the Cabinet on October 17 seeking to reauthorize refueling efforts by the Maritime Self-Defense Forces in the Indian Ocean in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), despite a lack of consensus within the party. DPJ leader Ichiro Ozawa has floated several trial balloons in the press, but does not seem to have made up his own mind. This may represent a conscious strategy to remain ambiguous on the issue for the time being, according to at least one news report. Either way, the DPJ is unified in its plans to use its new-found majority in the Upper House to oppose the government's measure (Ref A).

[1](#)3. (C) Ozawa asserted in a letter in the October 9 Sekai monthly that he would push for Japan Self-Defense Forces

participation in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, were his party to gain power in the next Lower House elections. He claimed that it is unconstitutional under Article Nine for the SDF to participate in OEF maritime interdiction efforts (MIO), given the lack of an authorizing UNSCR, but constitutional for the SDF to use armed force overseas while participating in the UNSCR 1386-mandated ISAF. This assertion generated protest within his own party, and was criticized by the government. Shortly afterward, Ozawa said that support for ISAF is official DPJ policy, and that members who disagree with the policy should leave the party.

¶4. (C) Party leaders have since walked back that statement, noting that Ozawa had only intended to state that support for UN-authorized actions is official DPJ policy, and that those who disagree are "free" to leave. DPJ Diet Affairs Chair Kenji Yamaoka later told reporters that Ozawa meant to say only that support for UN-authorized multilateral efforts was in keeping with general party policy. DPJ policy chief Masayuki Naoshima explained that it is "theoretically possible" that air, land, or sea elements of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) could participate in ISAF.

¶5. (C) Ruling party leaders were critical. LDP policy chief Sadakazu Tanigaki called Ozawa's view "extremely peculiar." Even some-time allies Socialist Party of Japan leader Mizuho Fukushima and Japan Communist Party leader Kazuo Shii slammed the proposal as unconstitutional. Media reporting has been slanted against Ozawa's interpretation of the Constitution as well. Press reports speculate that Ozawa may have tried too hard to differentiate his party from the ruling parties, once he realized that his initial call for civilian participation

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in humanitarian and reconstruction activities is already covered by existing assistance.

¶6. (C) Ozawa has taken a lower profile on the issue since causing the flap, and has refused to discuss the contents of the DPJ's counterproposal in any detail. He has reportedly backed down from the idea of sending combat forces, but has offered contradictory options, ranging from participation by SDF military units in stabilization activities in conjunction with provisional reconstruction teams, to provision of non-combat supply and medical units staffed by civilian SDF personnel and guarded by private security contractors, to basic food aid.

¶7. (C) Embassy DPJ contacts confide that Ozawa is motivated more by domestic political aspirations rather than the substance of the refueling issue. His goal is to force the dissolution of the Lower House as quickly as possible. However, odds for forcing dissolution have fallen slightly since the election of Prime Minister Fukuda to succeed Shinzo Abe. Fukuda has had solid public support since his election as Prime Minister on September 26, according to poll results. Furthermore, the Prime Minister's conciliatory tone toward the DPJ, which has responded negatively to offers to negotiate on this and other legislation, makes him a more difficult target than Abe. Some Embassy contacts say that Ozawa's waffling on the OEF and ISAF reflects frustration over these new, post-Abe political realities, as much as his failure to gain the high ground on the OEF debate.

¶8. (C) Comment. However Ozawa decides to proceed, it will take a balancing act to satisfy both security-minded conservatives and former members of the Socialist Party within the DPJ. Ozawa not only sees this issue as his main opportunity to challenge the ruling parties, but also as a way to consolidate his own leadership within the DPJ. Many DPJ members, however, understand that it is safer and more beneficial to Japan's national interests to continue participating in OEF-MIO, rather than sending personnel into a combat zone.

SCHIEFFER